



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001

Tel 919-733-4534 • Fax 919-715-4645

Michael F. Easley, Governor

Dempsey Benton, Secretary

TO: ALL EMPLOYEES OF DHHS MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES
FROM: DEMPSEY BENTON
RE: CHANGES TO STATE-OPERATED SERVICES
DATE: JANUARY 3, 2008

Every year, 25,000 people are served through our 14 state facilities. We owe those folks and their families the best possible service. I know that you go to work each day with that goal in mind. Thank you for your work.

In the past six months, several of our hospitals have received unfavorable reviews from either CMS or the Joint Commission. We have taken action to address these issues – the most important being a leadership change at Broughton Hospital announced late last month.

But it is clear that we need to take other action as well across the system, particularly in the psychiatric hospitals.

As part of the plan, I'm moving the state-operated services section out of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services to report directly to me for at least the next six months. It is crucial that section and the facilities have a close alliance with my office during what are critical times for our psychiatric hospitals.

One issue we are also concerned with is ensuring a good working environment for our employees. Last fall, the Office of State Personnel approved an in-range salary adjustment of an average of five percent for psychiatrists at all of our facilities. At the time, we didn't have the money to fund that increase. But, I've directed staff to find that money and fund it effective January 1, 2008.

We also have concerns about health care tech and nursing salaries. We need to be competitive in the work environment, and I want to make sure that our salaries are competitive with what other similar employees make across the state. I've directed our human resources staff to undertake an immediate study of that situation. If we are going to provide quality care to our patients, then we need to provide a quality work environment for our employees.

Other changes include:

- Delaying the closing of Dorothea Dix and Umstead hospitals for 60 days, giving the new Broughton Hospital management time to improve operations and assuring sufficient time to address any remaining construction issues with the new hospital.
- Forming an external work group to assess the construction and operational questions associated with opening of the hospital. The group will meet with the architect and project manager to review these questioned areas. The group will also review the plan for the transition of services from Dorothea Dix Hospital and John Umstead Hospital to the new hospital.
- A Hospital Management and Operations work group will be convened to work with the State Hospital Directors. The Committee will be comprised of individuals external to the department and will include academics, former state facility managers, advocates, the North Carolina Hospital Association and private providers. Areas of review will include protocols for violence, for placement of restraints, and administrative guidelines that can be consistently implemented throughout the state hospital system.
- A work group will be established to review the implementation of the state's Crisis Service System, and the state's overall strategy for providing inpatient services (beds) across the state. The group will review the current implementation activities and refine the definition of the core level of crisis services which should exist in all areas of the state.





North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001

Tel 919-733-4534 • Fax 919-715-4645

Michael F. Easley, Governor

Dempsey Benton, Secretary

- Creation of a new web site to improve public understanding of the activities in the State operated facilities. The site can be accessed at ncdhhs.gov and will be fully operational by the end of January. It will include a broad array of information, including admissions/discharge data, patient deaths/injuries and staff injuries. It will also include good news about your institutions. I hope you will provide us with story ideas. To do so, you can contact our public affairs office at 919 733 9190.

Dempsey Benton, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dempsey Benton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

